

Cartaret Arms  
16 South Broad Street  
Elizabeth, Union County, New Jersey

HABS-<sup>6</sup>NJ-66

HABS  
NJ  
20-ELI  
7-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
District of New Jersey

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Seymour Williams, A.I.A., District Officer  
133 Central Avenue, Rahway, New Jersey

A D D E N D U M

"Carteret Arms" (residence)  
(The Robinson Thomas House)  
16 South Broad Street  
Elizabeth, Union County, New Jersey

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N.J.  
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Owner: Jersey State Electric Company, Inc.,  
2 South Broad Street, Elizabeth, N. J.

Date of Erection: About 1795-1800

Architect: Unknown

Builder: Robinson Thomas (1766-1813), original owner

Present Condition: Used lately as a warehouse until  
demolished in May-June 1941\*

Number of Stories: Two and one-half, above basement

Materials of Construction:

Foundation - coursed ashlar brownstone above  
front grade line, broken range brown-  
stone elsewhere

Exterior walls - brick, except north side  
wall of modern stucco on frame

Interior walls - lath and plaster on frame  
studding, (all removed from first  
floor about 1913 when new stairway  
was built at rear)

Chimneys - brick, built into inside of  
gable end walls

Roof - gambrel, slate covered. Dormer  
windows are modern

\* Upon the removal of the 4-column front porch, the brickwork above the arched doorway showed clear line evidence of the former pediment to the wood door frame, which the porch had obviously replaced. In the "View in the central part of Elizabethtown", p. 159 of Barber and Howe, Historical Collections of the State of New Jersey (1844), this former doorway appears, as also a 6-post roofed verandah across the south end of the house and extending around the rear corner, at line of main floor, with a railed long flight of steps down to the front street. The slope of the land from the house to the river appears from this cut to have been since levelled by filling into the masonry retaining wall built at the river.

## Historical Data:

The origin of the name "Carteret Arms", as locally applied to this remaining example of late 18th century mansion house is not stated in such references to it as appear in print, none earlier than 1923 having been found.<sup>(a)</sup> The inference is made, however, that this name was that of the Inn which stood on the lot in 1728 (which then extending along the east side of Broad Street from Elizabeth Avenue to the Elizabeth River) and that after the destruction of that Inn, during or soon after 1795, the name being so well established was naturally applied to the house built afterwards on the same plot of ground although it was a private residence.<sup>(b)</sup> Search of title to this property in order to obtain the evidence from sources contemporary with the successive buildings and owners provides the following report.

(a) "Among the ancient landmarks is the Carteret Arms, 16 South Broad Street, on the site of a long, low one and a half story building used as a tavern before 1728, when the property was conveyed by John Morris, ycoman, to John Dennis, innholder. The latter conveyed it to Edward Thomas in 1730, and it was inherited in 1795 by Robinson Thomas, who soon afterward constructed the present building. The old inn was the resort of British officers of the garrison".....  
(A.V.D. Honeyman, editor, History of Union County, N.J. 1923, I, 189).

(b) If in fact, as here inferred, the name "At the Sign of the Carteret Arms", briefly "Carteret Arms", was applied to the inn by one of the successive owners, John Dennis or Edward Thomas Sr. and Jr., it was in honor of Philip Carteret, governor of East New Jersey 1677-1682, and derived more immediately from the fact that the government house built by him stood on a lot next eastward of the plot here considered, and was offered for sale in 1784 by Col. Edward Thomas. See E. F. Hatfield, Hist. of Elizabeth, N. J., 1868, p. 212 footnote. The name does not appear in the abstracts of newspapers, 1704-1782, publ. in N.J. Archives, nor in any deed or will pertinent to the chain of title, here traced, nor in Hatfield, op. cit. A cut showing the coat of arms of Governor Philip Carteret appears publ. in N.J. Archives 1st series, vol. 1, p. 351.

By a deed of 1st October 1730, John Dennis of Elizabeth Town, Innholder, and his wife Mary, conveyed to Edward Thomas of same place, yeoman, in consideration of 265 Pounds, "All that messuage and small tract of land situate in Elizabeth Town, on the north side of a creek or River running into the Town, and now in the tenure of said John Dennis," describing the lot as having 116 feet frontage on the south side of a highway<sup>(c)</sup> and 227 feet on the east side another highway (South Broad Street), with the river as its south, and the line of Aaron Schuyler and of John Morris as the eastern boundary. The amount of consideration money indicates the existence of a structure on the lot, and the description of the grantor as an "innholder" and of the property as being then in his tenure would establish the structure as an inn at this important street corner of ancient Elizabeth Town.

The grantee held the property at the date of his will, 3 January 1745, in which he, described as Edward Thomas of the Borough of Elizabeth, innholder, devised his estate to his wife Sarah and children: Rachel, Edward, Sarah, John and Anne, all minors. He died between that date and that of the probate, 5 August 1756.\* The Inn is described in a 1768 newspaper advertisement as follows:

(quote) To be Let and entered on the first of April or May next, the house and lot wherein the widow Sarah Thomas now lives, in Elizabeth Town, containing about three quarters of an acre of land. The house is in good repair,

(c) Elizabeth Avenue, formerly Water Street, is a part of what is, according to the late E.L. Meyer, probably the oldest road in New Jersey, opened by the Dutch before the settlement of Elizabeth Town to keep up the intercourse between New Amsterdam and their settlements on the Delaware. Later known as the King's Highway, it became the post and stage route to Philadelphia. (Historic Elizabeth 1664-1932, Warren R. Dix, editor, p. 21 ).

\* Abstract of Will publ. in N.J. Archives XXXII, 321. Edward Thomas Sr. mar. Sarah Drummond, dau. of Robert Drummond of N.Y.C. and Elizabethtown, N.J., and had issue: Col. Edward, Rachel wf. of Capt. John Elwes of British army, Sophie wf. of John Trail, Sarah wf. of Saml. Longworth, and Anna wf. of Lieut. Nicholas Tiebout. (F.W. Ricord, ed., Hist. Union Co. N.J., 1897, pp. 309 etc.)

has seven rooms on a floor, and two good cellars under the same, and a good kitchen, stable, and other outhouses, and a fine garden; the whole pleasantly situated on a post road from New York to Philadelphia, in the center of the town and within six rods of the court-house; and is a good stand for a store or public house, as it hath been occupied for one of both for upwards of thirty years past. Any person inclining to rent the same for one year, or a term of years, may know the conditions by applying to Edward Thomas, living near the premises. N.B. Said Thomas has two young negro wenches for sale, the one with or without two children; the other about fourteen years of age.(d)

Edward Thomas Jr.(e) son and heir abovenamed, held the paternal property at the southeast corner of

(d) The New York Gazette and Weekly Mercury, 15 Feb. 1768, reprinted in N.J. Archives, 2nd series, III, 392.

(e) Col. Edward Thomas, d. 27 Feb. 1795 in 59th yr., having mar. Mary Terrill who d. 27 Feb. 1824 aged 86, per gravestones in St. John's Chyd., Eliz., and had issue: William bp. 5 Dec. 1756, Edmund Drisley bp. 7 Jan. 1759, George Drummond bp. 30 Nov. 1760, Robinson bp. 5 June 1763, d. infancy, Phebe bp. 22 July 1764, d. 2 Apr. 1817, wf. of Wm. Roucastle, Robinson bp. 9 Mar. 1766, of whom further, Margaret Winans bp. 7 Feb. 1768, wf. of Job Haines, Henry Garretson bp. 16 Feb. 1772, Sarah d. unm., Elizabeth mar. 3 Sept. 1796 Beza Bliss, and George Cummins b. about 1780. (Inscriptions from Tombsts. First Presb. Chyd. and St. John's Chyd. Elizabeth, N.J., publ. 1892 p. 295. Register of St. John's Ch., publ. in Genealog. Mag. of N.J., III). Edward Thomas, Lieut. Col. in Col. Heard's battalion of Minute Men 12 Feb. 1776; Col. of 1st Regt. Essex County Militia 23 Feb. 1776; do. of battalion of Detached Militia 18 July 1776; resigned 13 Mar. 1777. (W.S. Stryker, Official Register of Officers and Men of N.J. in Rev. War, 356). Edward Thomas, Col. of N.J. Militia 1776-1778, d. 1795. (F.B. Heitman Historical Register of Officers of the Continental Army, 1775-1783, publ. 1914, p. 358). Govr. Livingston confirmed the acquittal of Col. Edward Thomas of the N.J. Militia by a court martial held at Elizabeth Town on 9 March 1779 on

South Broad Street and Elizabeth Avenue, here considered, at the date of his will, 25 March 1789, in which it is described and devised as follows. A three quarter acre lot "lying at the landing," quit-claimed to testator by his son Edmund D. Thomas, was ordered to be sold for the benefit of the personal estate, and the balance thereof, after payment of a mortgage, to be divided equally by the sons and daughters, excepting Phoebe wife of William Roucastle and George Cummins Thomas.

To his daughters Margaret, Sarah and Elizabeth he bequeathed the use of the "kitchen of the brick house where I now dwell"(f) and of an upper room therein, while unmarried, and to his wife the use of the rest of the house and lot of land "which was given me by my honored mother." To his son Robinson Thomas he devised "All that House, lot and Dock where my father and mother formerly lived, except so much of the north end of the garden which I shall hereafter give to my son Henry Thomas," with 1/4 of 1/20 of an undivided right in the Lomaton purchase" which was given to me by my honored father-in-law, Ephraim Ferril," with other land.

(e) continued

charges of cowardice and neglect of duty. (N.J. Archives 2nd series, III, 392, with editor's footnote biogr. account). Col. Thomas was named in the royal charter for the Boro of Elizabeth, gave land for the Northend school-house, owned the ferry to N.Y., was member of Committee of Observation, one of the commanding officers of the capture of Blue Mt. Valley, saw active service with Col. Heard's Flying Battalion on Long Island, was captured at his home on Elizabeth Ave. and carried prisoner to Staten Island by the British. (F.W. Ricord, editor, History of Union Co., N.J., 1897, p. 309).

(f) The Thomas House, 1178 Elizabeth Ave., built by Col. Edward Thomas, an eminent patriot, in 1760, was for many years the residence of the family. (A.V.D. Honeyman, Hist. Union Co., N.J., 1923, I. p. 190). See photo captioned "Ancient house built before the Revolution by Col. Edward Thomas.....and for many years the residence of his family", in F. W. Ricord, Hist. of Union Co., N. J., 1897, pp. 311 and 312. The house at 1178 Elizabeth Avenue built

To the son Henry G. Thomas he left "My House commonly called the shop or store and all the corner lots which I purchased of my honored mother before I built the said shop, and also the remainder of the land adjoining to the southward that I have not given to my son Robinson, which runs south and by west as the fence stands 60 links from the southwest corner of the said shop and then easterly in right angles until it strikes the lot whereon I now live, thence north on a line with the lot and house where I now dwell to the main road."

To the son George Cummins Thomas he gave "all that brick house<sup>(f)</sup> and lot whereon I now dwell, which lot was given me by my mother." To the daughter Phebe Rewcastle the house and lot purchased of Robert Ogden Jr. and Matthias Ogden, excepting part given to son Robinson, with a small lot adjoining. Considerable other land is divided among the children, and the executors appointed were his wife, son Robinson Thomas and son-in-law Job Hains.

Further description of the property devised to the son Robinson Thomas as above, appears in a mortgage, dated 12 March 1795, in which he conveyed to John De Hart, both parties being of the Borough of Elizabeth, "All the House Lot and Dock where Edward Thomas and Sarah his wife formerly lived," bounded Easterly by land of Benjamin Scudder and that formerly belonging to said Sarah Thomas, northerly by land devised by Edward Thomas, lately deceased, to his son Henry Thomas, westerly by the Highway or county road and southerly by Elizabeth Town Creek, being the House and lot and dock devised to said

(f) continued

by Col. Edward Thomas, was demolished in 1926, says Warren R. Dix in Historic Elizabeth 1664-1932, publ. 1932, p. 23. See Map of Elizabeth Town, N.J., 1775-83, made by Ernest L. Meyer, C. E., publ. 1879, which shows this house, the corner store, and the house (here considered) all on the lot marked "Edward Thomas", with footnotes in regard to the title thereof also an article and map, The Site of the First Government House of N.J., pp. 52-61 of Proc. N.J.H.S. 3rd. ser., III, by same historian.

Robinson Thomas by the will of said Edward Thomas deceased. It is clear, from this evidence, that the Inn in which the mortgagor's grandparents, Edward and Sarah Thomas, had resided (see advertisement of 1768 quoted supra) was still standing in 1795. Supposedly, it was known as the "Carteret Arms", and the name was transferred in popular reference to its successor, the house here considered.

Evidently the son and devisee, Robinson Thomas, demolished that Inn# during or soon after that year 1795 and built the residence, here considered, between it and the South Broad Street front of the lot. Its design and details are those of late 18th - early 19th century work. That it was not used as an inn at the sign of "Carteret Arms" or any other name is evident from the real estate mentioned in the inventory of the "goods and chattels, wares and merchandizes of Robinson Thomas late of Elizabeth Town in the County of Essex, deceased," thus: live stock "at the Dantroches Farm", 150,000 brick "At the lot near Abraham Manns" and furniture "At the Dwelling House of dec'd." The last is listed as being in the kitchen, Ursal Room (?), office, S.W. room upstairs, N.W. Room upstairs, drawing room, dining room, store room, and lower bedroom. Two negro boys at \$200 each and the Sloop Mary Gooden at \$150 are included in the total appraised value of the personal estate at \$5,077.\* No evidence of Robinson Thomas as an innkeeper or other occupation has been discovered.

# In excavating the site for the commercial building now being erected, about four feet east of and parallel with the new concrete rear wall, was disclosed a stone masonry wall with two brick fireplaces, evidently the eastern end wall foundation of the inn, also flagstone hearth and brick pavement some six feet below grade. (See Elizabeth Daily Journal, 23 July 1941)

\*Essex County Inventory Book B, p. 438



In his will dated 16 March 1813 and proved four days later in Essex County, this Robinson Thomas devised his property equally divided among his children (not named), empowered Daniel Snowhill as agent "at Spotswood" to complete all conveyances of land in that neighborhood, and appointed as executors his brother George Cummings Thomas, William Dayton, sister-in-law Sarah Smith, and daughter Mary Thomas. (g)

Previously by deed of 28 July 1812, Robinson Thomas and wife Elizabeth, of Elizabeth Township, conveyed to Richard Townley and David Meeker, of the same place, for \$1200, the "Lot and Stores standing at the corner of the Main Street and Water Street opposite the Union Hotel Tavern and now in the occupation of Oliver Nuttman and Company", having some 31 feet frontage on the highway (present South Broad Street) and 50 feet on Water Street, bounded south by land of said

(g) Robinson Thomas, bapt. 9 Mar. 1766 in St. John's Ch., Elizabeth, son of Col. Edward and Mary (Terrill) Thomas, d. 17 March 1813 in Elizabeth, N.J., having mar. 24 Apr. 1796 Elizabeth Smith of same place, who d. 22 Aug. 1812, and had issue: Mary, Edward bp. 28 Jan. 1800, Ezekiel Smith bp. 20 June 1802, Edward bp. 10 June 1804, Caroline Elizabeth bp. 4 Nov. 1806, Sarah Smith bp. 21 Aug. 1809, and Wm. Robinson bp. 23 Aug. 1812. (Register of St. John's Ch., Elizabeth 1750-1826, publ. in Genealog. Mag. of N.J., VI and IX, III). In the account of the Thomas Family, pp. 309 etc. of F.W. Ricord's Hist. of Union Co., N.J., 1897, it is stated that Robinson Thomas, a prominent churchman, warden of St. John's Elizabeth, married a niece of Daniel Webster and moved to Kentucky where his family still resides. This statement of removal is contrary to the evidence above cited and the record of probate of his will at Newark, N.J. describes him as "late of the County of Essex" decd.

In the south porch of St. John's Church is a marble tablet inscribed: "Sacred to the memory of Robinson Thomas who departed this life March 17th 1813 in the 47th year of his age. Also his wife Elizabeth Thomas who departed this life August 22nd, 1812 in the 37th year of her age."

Robinson Thomas and east by the house lot of George C. Thomas. It is evident from this deed that the grantor had come into possession of this corner property which had been devised to his brother Henry G. Thomas in the will of their father in 1789 as cited above, and so owned the whole lot extending from Water Street down to the river in 1812.

The four executors of the will of Robinson Thomas, deceased, conveyed by deed of 20 August 1814 to Caleb O. Halstead of Elizabethtown for \$9292.85 the "Certain message, dwelling house and lot of land where the said Robinson Thomas, lately deceased, lived" in Elizabethtown. The lot is described therein as bounded north by the lot sold by Robinson Thomas as owned by David Meeker and by Water Street, east by the lot of George C. Thomas and by one lately of Benjamin Scudder, South by Elizabethtown River, and west by the main street. Halstead conveyed the same property back to one of the executors, George C. Thomas, of Elizabethtown, for \$8040.35 by deed of same date.

George C. Thomas, last named, brother of Robinson Thomas, deceased, having thus come into possession of the latter's mansion, here surveyed, held the same until 1st July 1837, and being then of New York City, conveyed it to (his son) William W. Thomas of same city, in trust for the use of grantor's wife, Anna R. Thomas, with option for her to acquire the same upon request. Accordingly, by deed of 25 Feb. 1839, said William W. Thomas conveyed the property back to his father, George C. Thomas, both parties being described as of New York City, cancelling the deed of trust by request of said Anna R. Thomas. The grantee and his wife, last named, of New York City, mortgaged the property (with the adjacent "stone house and lot formerly belonging to the estate of Benjamin Scudder decd.") on same date to Griffin Taylor of Cincinnati, Ohio, for \$6000 due in five years, but lost it in foreclosure proceedings against them, the sheriff seizing the same by decree of the Chancery Court and conveying it to Caroline E. Alston by his deed of 25 July 1846, she being the highest bidder at public sale, \$3440.

By deed of 30 March 1853, this Caroline B. Alston of Cincinnati, conveyed the first of the two lots above mentioned to Maria I. Ransom, wife of Adam G. Ransom of the Borough of Elizabeth, for \$3500. She died intestate in the same year and her real estate descended to Elizabeth M. Gibbs as sole heir-at-law. The last named with her husband Alexander Gibbs, of the city of Elizabeth, Union County, conveyed to the said city by their deed of 10 February 1857 the southern end of the lot, being 100 feet on Broad Street between a 16 foot lane and Elizabeth River, bounded east by the land formerly of Benjamin Scudder decd. One of the city's fire department stations was erected thereon by 1860 and as rebuilt remains there now.

The same grantors conveyed the balance of the lot, having a frontage of 140 feet on Broad Street (including the house of Robinson Thomas, here considered) to Oliver Hout, merchant, of New York City, by their deed of 4 March 1858, for \$5000.\* Hout and wife Maria, being of Stamford, Conn., passed title to Isaac Foulks of Elizabeth, N. J., by deed of 15 February 1860, and he to the Elizabeth Orphans Asylum Association two days later, the same, excepting a strip 24 feet wide off the northern end of the lot. The Association passed title to Amos Clark Jr., of Elizabeth, on 14 June 1873, and he to Julie d'Anterrockes Jones, wife of Eugene Jones, of New York City, on 27 December 1898, with other property. The map of the 9th Ward of the City of Elizabeth published in the Union County Atlas of 1906, shows the lot with the house here surveyed, as owned by Julie d'A. Stout and occupied as the Public Library.

The property passed from Mrs. Stout, formerly Jones, and her husband Eugene A. Stout of New York City to Mary N. Putnam and Lebbeus B. Miller, both of Elizabeth, N. J., on 13 February 1913, and from them to the Elizabeth Historic and Civic Association, Inc., on October next. That society having been dissolved, its directors conveyed the property to the Woman's Club of Elizabeth, N.J., on 16 December 1929 and they held it

\*Union County Deed Book 2-606. Union Co. created from Essex Co. 1857

until conveyance to The Citizens Building and Loan Association of Elizabeth on 27 February 1937, who leased the premises to the Jersey State Electric Company as a warehouse early in 1939 with an option of purchase, and by deed of 26 December 1940 conveyed the property to Joseph M. Waldo of that company.

In February 1941, planning to replace "Carteret Arms" with a \$50,000 commercial structure,\* a representative of the company offered the house to Mr. Walter H. Cole, chairman of the Historic Affairs Commission of the Board of Works, city of Elizabeth. The latter was unable to accept the offer since the Board had no available site for the house nor means to remove it,<sup>(h)</sup> and accordingly demolition was started in May 1941.

Reference:

Search of title in the land and probate records of Essex and Union Counties by James Hanlon, H.A.B.S. abstractor, reported 5 Feb. 1941 and in the preceding records thereof, now filed in the office of the Secretary of State, by William Brown, H.A.B.S. research editor, 16 June 1941

*Lewis D. Cook*  
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Supervising Historian 20 June 1941

\* Harry Maslow, architect, formerly supervising draftsman of the Union County office of H.A.B.S. in New Jersey.

(h) Newark Star Ledger, 7 February 1941.